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5 March 2023 – 2nd Sunday in Lent

Matthew 17.1-9

**If Christianity is anything, it is both spectacularly
challenging and edifying**

The disciples like you, have experienced something of the awe, wonder and the beauty of God and his eternal truths through a whole range of experiences. For example, through an exceptionally holy person who touched your heart; while reading God's Word, saying your prayers by being in a sacred place; in a moment of realisation that God is God, or through an experience that could only have come from God. True, not many people experienced what Peter, James and John lived through!

For the disciples, and for us, these revelations seem to last only so long, and then we 'descend' the mountain hoping it will continue. They don't. Rather, like the disciples we return to the 'plain', and continue to wrestle with Jesus' call to take up 'your cross', and 'follow me'.

For as you know, Jesus never suggested that 'take up your cross' was a call to fame, admiration, riches, security or being popular. Rather, and you know this oh so well, Jesus Christ shows that self-sacrifice and a willingness to serve is the path he calls you to walk along. In one sense Jesus really puts the icing on the cake when he chooses 'the cross' rather than continue with his teaching and healing people.

Taking up your cross serves as another powerful 'pull' in our lives, for the cross quite simply reveals to you, more than anything else the disastrous results of sin (failing to hit the mark, failing to reveal the truth within you), and therefore the extraordinary lengths Jesus was willing to go to, in order to ensure that salvation is open to all. Perhaps this also reminds us what only God can do, and what we can't. That is, Jesus Christ was willing to be tortured, and treated as a slab of meat by his own creation, 'for the sins of the world'.

But, we shouldn't leave it there, that is, think, "Oh God, thank you for what you achieved through your Son on the cross". For accepting that only God can save humanity is only part of God's package to you. For God then expects humans to co-operate with him. This in some ways is as earth shattering as God's victory through the cross, for by God calling you to co-operate with him, it tells you the dignity and nobleness God knows you have. God knows the authentic greatness that lies within your soul. For this 'image of God' within you is bursting to respond to Christ's call "take up your cross".

Stephen



St David's Day, 1st March

His last words to his followers came from a sermon he gave on the previous Sunday: 'Be joyful, keep the faith, and do the little things that you have heard and seen me do'.

The phrase 'Gwnewch y pethau bychain' – 'Do the little things' – is still well-known in Wales.

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom, will be led by Rev Dafydd Jones. We will celebrate Communion. Bible Reading : excerpts from John chapter 3.

Cycle of Prayer in the Swansea Region – we will pray for Christ Well

Tea and Chat – Tuesday, 7th - 2 pm.



Thank you to all who responded to this appeal. £1,000 has been sent to Christian Aid.

God of Compassion

(Lectionary readings: Genesis 12.1-4a: Psalm 121: Romans 4.1-4, 13-17: John3.1-17 or Matthew 17.1-9):

God of compassion,
today Lord I bring you all of my situations.
When my strength has reached its capacity.
i lift my eyes to you, the one I trust - the maker of heaven and earth.
Thank you for the gift of your presence.

God of compassion.
When I lift my eyes, only to see strife, grief and sadness, draw my focus back to you,
the one who breathes life into the impossible.
You guard my heart and never grow tired or weary.
You invite me to rest in your presence, assured by the depth of your love and protection.

God of compassion.
You give the sanctuary of shade when the sun pierces my skin with heat.
When surrounded by darkness, you provide your light as a sanctuary.
You keep my soul.
I lift my eyes to you and I remember I am known and loved by you. **Amen.**

Stephen Ansa-Addo (URC Prayer Handbook 2023)

